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Our Little Secrets

He Said Later He Was "Stupid"

"If I had to listen to her, I probably would have developed a little bit of a segregationist feeling.

But I think everybody can look at my life and what I've done and say that's not true.... I mean, she was such a bitch." Thus spake North Carolina Rep. Cass Ballenger about former US Georgia rep Cynthia McKinney, said comments being made on the record to the Charlotte Observer, amidst discussion of the Trent Lott affair.

From Fleischer's Pressroom, Jan 6

Ari Fleischer: Actually, the President has made it very clear that he has not dispute with the people of Iraq. That's why the American policy remains a policy of regime change. There is no question the people of Iraq –

Helen Thomas: That's a decision for them to make, isn't it? It's their country.

Fleischer: Helen, if you think that the people of Iraq are in a position to dictate who their dictator is, I don't think that has been what history has shown.

Thomas I think many countries don't have — people don't have the decision — including us….

Russell Mokhiber: Ari, other than Elliott Abrams, how many convicted criminals are on the White House staff?

Fleischer: (Laughter.) You tell me, Russell. You seem to keep count.

Mokhiber: Can you give me a list

(**OLS** *continued on page 2*)

"Unlawful Combatant"

The Hamdi Ruling

A January ruling by the Fourth Cir cuit federal court of appeals, headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, has blessed Attorney General John Ashcroft's contention that American citizens detained as enemy combatants can be held indefinitely without access to a lawyer.

The case involves the fate of Yasser Esam Hamdi, an American citizen of Saudi descent who was captured in Afghanistan and has been held in the Norfolk Naval Brig since April of last year. Ashcroft argues that Hamdi forfeited his constitutional rights when he decided to fight alongside the Taliban. Thus far Hamdi has been prevented from having any contact with his family or lawyers and the Justice Department wants to keep it that way indefinitely.

The government has yet to offer any proof that Hamdi was actually part of the Taliban's army or that he was waging war against American troops. The lawyers acting on Hamdi's behalf filed a habeas corpus motion asking that the government turn over to the defense counsel the documents the feds used to conclude that he was in fact an enemy combatant. The court turned them down tersely, saying "No further factual inquiry is necessary or proper."

The court relies on a single fact to support Hamdi's indefinite detention: that "it is undisputed that he was captured in a zone of active combat operations abroad". None of the allegations about Hamdi possessing an AK-47 and other military equipment was relied on for the court's sweeping holding. Hamdi can't see the evidence used to detain him. So he has no way to challenge the government's allegations. And the court doesn't want to see the evidence either.

"Under the court's reasoning, any journalist, aid worker or, indeed, human rights watch researcher picked up in Afghanistan could be detained indefinitely as an enemy combatant", says Joanne Mariner, a human rights lawyer in New York. "The court finds that active hostilities are ongoing there, so people could be arrested at any time."

"It is important to emphasize that we are not placing our imprimatur upon a new day of executive detentions," writes chief justice J. Harvie Wilkinson. "We earlier rejected the summary embrace of 'a sweeping proposition -- namely that, with no meaningful judicial review, any American citizen alleged to be an enemy combatant could be detained indefinitely without charges or counsel on the government's say-so.' But, Hamdi is not 'any American citizen alleged to be an enemy combatant' by the government; he is an American citizen captured and detained by American allied forces in a foreign theater of war during active hostilities and determined by the United States military to have been indeed allied with enemy forces."

So, in theory, American citizens enjoy the right to meaningful judicial review. In practice, they don't. The Fourth Circuit ruling elicits a sinister echo from the old phrase, "With all due deference".

"The events of September 11 have left their indelible mark", Wilkinson concludes. "It is not wrong even in the dry annals of judicial opinion to mourn those who lost their lives that terrible day. Yet we speak in the end not from sorrow or anger, but from the conviction that separation of powers takes on special significance when the nation itself comes under attack. Hamdi's status as a citizen, as important as that is, cannot displace our constitutional order or the place of the courts within the Framer's scheme. Judicial review does not disappear during wartime, but the review of battlefield captures in overseas conflicts is a highly deferential one."

(**Hamdi** *continued on page 6)*

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Our Little Secrets

of convicted criminals on the White House staff, other than Elliott Abrams?

Fleischer: I'll go right to the convicted criminals division and ask them to turn — (Laughter.)

Mokhiber: No, seriously — why isn't being convicted of a criminal a disqualifier for being on the White House staff?

Fleischer: Russell, this is an issue that you like to repeat every briefing. I refer you to the —

Mokhiber: But you don't answer —

Fleischer — repeat I gave you the third time you asked it, which matched the second, which corresponded to the first.

Here at CounterPunch we feel these exchanges show Fleischer to advantage. You think Mokhiber, co-editor of the excellent Multinational Monitor, would have been repeatedly allowed into the pressromm in Clinton Time?

Early Vietnam Demos

In the past few weeks veterans of these early marches have been pooling their memories for CounterPunch. Here's a recollection to me of one of the earliest, from Lawrence Reichard, who these days works as an organizer in Stockton, California, defending rural workers.

"In the spring of 1962," Reichard writes, " when I was three years old, my mother dragged me to a demonstration against the U.S. war in Laos in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. There were five people at that demo. My mom, my older brother, me and two others." Then, "In 1969 I rode in a VW bus from Charlotte, N.C. to Washington, D.C. for an anti-war demo that drew 500,000. According to Daniel Ellsberg that demo made Nixon reconsider the madman recommendation of his joints chiefs of staff to nuke Vietnam within a few miles of the Chinese border."

That trip was especially memorable for him, Reichard continues, because he made it with the family of Norman Morrison, who immolated himself in front of the Pentagon in protest over the war. Reichard recalls that he read later that LBJ's aides cut mention of Morrison's death out of his newspapers so he wouldn't see it.

"On the rare occasion that I'm asked to speak at a demo, and the turnout is low," Reichard concludes, " I speak about the turnout in Cedar Rapids, and the turnout in D.C. years later, as a way to rally the troops and lift spirits. Imperialism and colonialism are not stopped in a day!" He points out that "It is also noteworthy that in 1954 the American Friends Service Committee wrote a letter to the Eisenhower administration warning against U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Reichard ended thus, "The anti-war movement has much to be proud of. To the absolute fury of the right wing, the anti-war movement of yesterday and today still, to this day, shackles this country's ability to wage unfettered war. Right off the bat they have to forget about any war that might last more than six months or cost more than a few hundred U.S. lives. For this you can thank the peace movement and the Vietnamese, who, at tremendous cost, beat us militarily. The entire world owes a tremendous debt to the Vietnamese."

The Nuts At Camera

By Bill Mink

On December 12, 2002, an article in the Boston Globe caught my eye. A group called Jewish Women for Justice in Israel/Palestine (JWJIP) was picketing WordsWorth Books, in Cambridge, MA, over the store's decision to halt its contributions to WBUR-FM, the local NPR affiliate. The store's action was part of a larger underwriter boycott, all fueled by allegations of an "anti-Israel bias" at the station, and JWJIP intimated that WordsWorth president Hillel Stavis was somehow behind this attempt at shutting down public radio's coverage of realities in the Middle East.

Picketing "one of the last independent bookstores in Boston" because it doesn't agree with one's beliefs, Stavis told the Globe, "is the height of the suppression of free speech."

It turned out that Stavis's critique of WBUR came straight from the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, an organization of which the Globe identified Stavis as a member.

CAMERAis a group that was formed after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Under the guise of promoting "accurate and balanced coverage of Israel and the Middle East", the group has helped silence critics of Israel by, one, putting a positive spin on state-sponsored terrorism, and, two, tarring most criticism of the Jewish State as a slip down some slope towards endorsing the Final Solution. Over the years, they've accused Architectural Review, CNN, Thomas Friedman, National Geographic, Peter Jennings, and the Lonely Planet travel guide of insufficient loyalty to the Light Unto Nations. In a characteristic move, they have libeled the late Holocaust survivor and human rights activist Israel Shahak as "one of the world's leading anti-Semites." Their scare mongering and paranoia are equal parts laughable and ghoulish.

With that in mind, I sent an email to Stavis reflecting my impressions: both a disbelief over censorship of, rather than from, the CAMERA crowd; and a question as to whether a store that operated according to that group's proscriptions might service the belles lettres best by a graceful bow towards its own bankruptcy. For a man who was simultaneously handing out leaflets denouncing the JWJIP as "Holocaust Preparers," Stavis sent a polite if condescending reply. He had no doubt that I was "a critical thinker and a person committed to social justice." He merely questioned my grasp of the facts. I had, he assumed, never taken "the time to examine the record and facts of NPR's bias, inaccuracies and violations of its own high standards of journalistic ethics." He was, naturally, willing to provide me with any information I might need if I chose "to see the evidence and not judge precipitously".

I wrote back that he had understood me too quickly. I'm under no illusions as to the

Editors
Alexander Cockburn
Jeffrey St. Clair

Business
Becky Grant (Manager)
Anna Amezcua

Design
Deborah Thomas

Counselor
Ben Sonnenberg

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CounterPunch
PO Box 228
Petrolia, CA 95558
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counterpunch@counterpunch.org
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standards and practices at NPR. Yet I find their failings to work consistently in Israel's favor. The network treats the Jewish State as most mainstream media treat our other favored allies. Blind eyes are turned, and excuses are made. He had failed to address the actual concerns of my letter.

Acknowledging his CAMERA connections, I brought up CAMERA's tactic of scouring bookstores' Middle East sections for titles by Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, etc., and demanding that staff reshelve these laymen "posing as experts". In their place, CAMERA recommends such propagandist whoreprose as Joan Peters' thoroughly discredited From Time Immemorial. If WordsWorth took Stavis's group's advice, I wrote, I'd have two reasons for shopping elsewhere: politics and common sense.

The response from Stavis made much of my mention of Israel Shahak. Stavis wrote that he attended a "Chomsky high mass" at which Shahak "chose to digress from his usual screed against the Jewish State and launched into a description of the perfidy of the Jews in general". This was accompanied, Stavis assured me, by the "thunderous applause of Mr. Chomsky's acolytes." Preferring, as Byron put it, to "leave scandal slender handle," I dropped a line to Chomsky himself. His response was short, and to the point. "Stavis is quite mad," he wrote, "and feels free to lie at will." The event, Chomsky continued, bore little resemblance to the one Stavis describes:

"It was a talk by Shahak at MIT, which was "Chomsky high mass" in the sense that I introduced him, maybe 5 minutes. A gang of young ultra-right Jews, obviously well organized (and with Stavis smirking in the background) took over the meeting with hysterical shrieking, diatribes, denunciations of Shahak. One young guy of maybe 18 even stood up and screamed "how dare you say those things when 6 million of us died." He screamed that at Shahak, a graduate of the Warsaw Ghetto and Bergen-Belsen. Several friends and colleagues of mine who had just barely escaped Europe before Hitler took over their countries were there. They said afterwards they'd seen nothing like it since the Hitler Jugend."

RACISM? CHECK OUT THE BLACK FARMERS

Amid the national anguish over the Trent Lott affair, the racism of everyday life continues unnoticed, except by those confronted by it. Take the plight of black farmers.

In the 1920s, there were nearly one million black-owned farms. Today, there are less than 18,000, with dozens more being foreclosed on each week. After the farms are seized by the lenders, they are offered up for sale and picked up by white farmers or corporate ag giants. All to often, the agent doing the foreclosing is the Farm Security Administration, established by FDR in the 1930s to provide federal loans to small farmers. Overall the New Deal was a disaster for rural blacks. The setaside money given to large-scale white farms meant simply that the black sharecroppers got kicked off the land as the white farmers took New Deal money to take their land out of production.

The FSA, though, provided to be the most racist outpost in the most racist sector of the federal government: the Agriculture Department. Part of that had to do with the way the system was designed. Each county has an FSA committee consisting of five board members elected by the farmers from that area. The committee hires an executive director who is responsible for handling loans, crop subsidies and insurance for the farmers in that county. These representatives have been overwhelmingly white and ultra-conservative. So black farmers, already pinched by the dreadful economics of farming marginal lands, are forced to beg for loans from racist FSA loan officers and then plead for extra time to pay them off when their crops are destroyed by floods, droughts or blight.

A white loan officer at the Farm Security Administration had a noose hanging from his office wall and swung it back and forth when blacks entered the office.

Blacks rarely got loans and when they did they rarely got the kind of breaks that white farmers did. "Nobody got promoted based on making loans to small and poor producers", says John Zippert, a civil rights organizer in Alabama. "No one ever got promoted because their portfolio of loans was racially inclusive."

The situation became so dire that the Black Farmers of America took the Clinton administration to court, charging that the Agriculture Department had become a bastion of institutionalized racism which had defrauded more than 60,000 black farmers. In 1999, a federal court agreed. Judge Paul Friedman pinned much of the blame for the downfall of the black farmer on the racist practices of the USDA and the FSA's county committees, which he ruled "do not represent the racial diversity of the communities they serve." A settlement was reached wherein the USDA pledged to root out the racists in its ranks and increase minority representation on the county committees.

But three years later little has changed. A Freedom of Information Act request filed by the Black Farmers of America this fall shows that of the 8,375 FSA committee members nationwide only 51 are black. Alabama, the state with the most black farmers, has only one black committee member. North Carolina only has two and Virginia just three. Since that time only four FSA employees have been removed for civil rights violations. "The morning after the lawsuit, black farmers are having to go back to the scene of the crime to deal with the same individuals who have been found guilty of denying, delaying and frustrating their efforts to get loans in the first place," Tom Burrell, a leader of the Black Farmers of America. told the Richmond News-Dispatch.

The farmers are ready to go back to court, but the Bush administration contends that there's really not a problem. "We're dealing here to some extent with a perceptual problem as opposed to a real problem," Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Lou Gallegos told the House Agriculture Committee in December. How's this for a "perceptual" problem. In 1996, Lou Anne Kling worked as a supervisor at the FSA. She was approached by a black secretary who said that Arthur Hall, a white loan officers, had a noose hanging from his office wall and swung it back and forth when blacks entered the office. Kling reported the incident to her superiors. An investigation was launched. But it concluded that Hall had done nothing illegal or discriminatory and the case was closed. Not only was Hall not fired, he wasn't even disciplined.

In December, Arleane Leland, the Bush administration's general counsel for civil rights at the USDA, was questioned about the incident in a congressional hearing. Leland said that while Hill "showed poor

(**OLS** *continued on page 6)*

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Return to Kabul

A Louse in the Hand

BY NOOR BESHARAT

Finally the plane touched the ground and along with many other passengers I saw the sunshine of my birth country after more than 20 years of leaving Kabul. My heart was beating with excitement and as soon as my feet were on the ground I went on my knees to kiss the ground. I had been missing the taste and smell of the soil of my country since childhood.

So there it was, Kabul. The city that Babar the Mughol emperor had been so in love with. The poets wrote poems of it and the travellers admired it. That was of course a long time ago but at least in my time, Kabul was wearing the proud dress of history with its museums packed with evidence of the glorious era, its libraries full of books, its archives alive and its university of high repute.

Alas I saw nothing resembling my memories. Kabul in complete ruin, this is what I went back to. At the end every square metre of Afghanistan was painful. The Rulers in power in Afghanistan are still fundamentalists preaching through the voices of Mullahs who wake up early in the morning shouting at the people, using their noisy loudspeakers criticizing those Afghan men for allowing their daughters to go to schools and their families to watch TV. Ironically Afghan TV does not offer anything special. Women singers are not allowed to perform and there is nothing entertaining or educational, but cheap-censored Indian films and speeches by strict politicians capturing the TV screen, day in and day out.

Outside, the streets are full of beautiful and vulnerable children of both sexes begging along with the disabled old men and women. Yet ministers are zooming with big cars from here to there. Every thing is just acting like a play away from reality. The warlord system is evident in all aspects of life. Mullahs with long beards demand to have bigger organizations, paid for by the NGOs and the UN. Employment is only provided for family, friends or people of the same clan and party. If you are none of these then, you do not exist.

Horrifying stories become alive and they touch you, torture you, traumatize you. The story of Zardad, who had a man-eating dog who was indeed a man. The story of Hezbe Wahdat eye-gouging and cutting women's breasts. The stories of raped women kept naked in cellars. The story of Sayaf's party hammering nails through the scalps of innocent civilians. The stories of destruction beyond recognition. The stories of madness, madness and madness. And of course the story of sadness because the same mad people are in power again.

One story goes that there was a mad commander with long dirty hair who nourished lice on his head and who would routinely block the road with his bandit group demanding money from the travelers. He would stop people and ask them to buy his lice, starting conversations like, "hey brother give me the palm of your hand" and the person stopped by the authority would oblige by stretching out his palm.

Horrifying stories become alive and they touch you, torture you, traumatize you. The story of Zardad, who had a man-eating dog who was indeed a man.

The commander would put one of his lice on the palm of the traveler's hand. The traveler watches with disgust but cannot react knowing the commander would shoot him if he does not do whatever the commander wants. And the commander would authoritatively say, "So tell me how much you pay for this healthy louse?" And if a reply was, "Sir I do not want to buy it", the commander would roar, "You do not want to buy my louse? You stupid idiot, what is wrong with my louse? Buy it or I kill you."

The commander therefore sold the lice to the passers-by for a huge amount of money. The traveler keeps the louse only for a short distance controlling his disgust and when confident that the commander is no longer watching, he would throw it away, only to be stopped a short distance later by the commander and be interrogated further. "Hey what did you do with my louse?" the commander would shout. "I threw it away sir". "Did you really?" "Yes". "You did very wrong, you idiot. I practically gave you my louse. So now you either return my lice or pay ten fold more."

What is more shocking is the monopoly of power. No doubt that there are a number of ministers not belonging to the Northern Alliance, but the power of these ministers is only symbolic. While I was there until September of last year the Minister of culture, Mr Makhdom, had no authority over the Chief of Kabul Radio and Television. While Mr Makhdom encourages the participation of women on radio and television, the Chief of Radio, a fundamentalist Northern Alliance fighter, ignores this and issues his own home-made fatwas and no women singer or artist performs on radio or television.

Another story describes the prevailing culture. In the past a man became the King of Afghanistan. The new king distributed power among his friends and they became ministers and governors. Unfortunately, one of his very close friends was forgotten by the new king. The close friend complained bitterly that he did not have a significant post. The king laughed and said, "My dear friend

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The turbans have changed to pakols, but the heads are covered with the same mentality.

you will be my watchman. Your job title may be watchman but you have my permission and power to slap the face of any minister that upsets you."

There are so many watchmen like these in the new regime. The most powerful are those from Panjsheer. Don't be a minister but be a watchman from Panjsheer. That job is more powerful.

Optimism? Girls and boys are going back to school. I travelled to Bamyan and was astonished to see my people still living in the dark caves. I was even more surprised to see the same people sending their children to schools. They know that most of the atrocities that happened in the country were related to lack of knowledge and education. UNICEF had predicted that only 1.5 million children would get back to school but the reality was much more optimistic with an estimated figures of some 4.5 million children attending schools by the summer of 2002.

However, such an Afghan cultural revolution is not entirely successful because the enthusiasm of the people is not matched with the government's support. UNICEF and the government of Afghanistan have had the capacity to provide no more than very basic facilities for maybe half of the 1.5 million targeted school children. Some remote areas such as Bamyan do not get any support. The schools that have been damaged are not repaired.

UNICEF massages its figures by claiming that the organization has rehabilitated a thousand schools. The reality is that much of UNICEF's engagement is cosmetic and for the sake of inflating statistics, by such means as counting simply the replacement of a single door or minor repair as "reconstruction" or in a more successful project the building of five classrooms for an area which require at least thirty-two.

Moreover, the warlords do not allow the teachers to get their salaries. The warlords control provinces and fraudulently retain the salaries sent by the UN. The teachers are powerless and have not received their salary for a long, long time, in a system with no accountability.

Girls and boys beg in the street. I watched children collecting food from garbage or being chased by the new regime police and beaten up. A bomb planted in a car killed more than 30 people, including three brothers who were the sole breadwinners of a big family. For many days I waited to hear any word of condemnation from the mullahs but there was none. The mullahs were delivering speeches on qurbani (slaughter) of animals in Eid.

Afghanistan has a few new-rich people. There are entire streets in Wazir Akbar Khan, the most sought-after area of Kabul, which now belong to Northern Alliance ministers. Fahim, the defense minister has bought the whole street and blocked it for his own safety. His soldiers would not allow any body including pedestrians to walk on that street. Each of those houses at least has a value of $400,000. Thanks to the mujahiddeen having destroyed much of Kabul, maintaining only select areas of Wazir Akbar Khan and Shehre Naw, the values of houses has shot up, beyond European prices. The lions of Panjsheer know very well how to get rich from wars. Yes destroy half of the country, then confiscate some houses from their owners in the neighborhoods that were not destroyed. Becoming rich like this does not require qualification. Becoming a minister in Afghanistan does not need qualification either.

One thing that has not changed at all is the rights of women. Muslim extremists do not recognize the rights of women. In the office where I was working women came to the office with fear. Their fear was not in their imaginations. People like Gulbudin Hekmatyar are there to throw acid on the faces of those women who appear on the street wearing the modest chador but not the burqa (veil). One of my female colleagues wanted to go to another country for training provided by the UN. A fundamentalist mullah was in charge of the passport processing. He simply told the woman that she was a prostitute to be working in an office.

These are the same people who sold the Afghan women to Arab fundamentalists. People still talk about the shameful deed of the Taliban when they went and destroyed all Shomali, killed the men and took all the women, put them in buses and sent them to Pakistan where the Arabs on the other side were waiting for them. Where was the Afghan nang (honor)? Life is very cheap in my country. Frustrated Americans who have failed to find Osama or the real al-Qaeda, bomb the wedding parties. I read the reports on the internet but no action is taken visibly or otherwise, by anybody to stop these crimes. I hear that it is the Northern Alliance guiding the Americans to bomb the Pushtoon villages. I just feel sorry for my people and then again, I know very well the stories of the Americans bombings in Cambodia and in Vietnam. The Americans are not in Afghanistan because they love the Afghans.

I know that Osama is going to emerge again in a different form and name, discretely supported by the USA. I know that. Don't we all?

The turbans have changed to pakols, but the heads are covered with the same mentality. My country's descent has not slowed or changed.

Noor Besharat is a poet and writer. He was born in Kabul and left in 1979 when Russians invaded Afghanistan. He has worked on humanitarian projects in many countries.

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(**HAMDI** *continued from page 1*)

In other words, the Fourth Circuit court is willing to accept the Bush's administration's assertion that Hamdi is an "enemy combatant" without requiring a shred of evidence as to how the government reached that conclusion. Indeed, Wilkinson suggests that it would be impolite for the court even to inquire about the evidence used to obliterate Hamdi's constitutional rights. So much for checks and balances.

"I am most disturbed by the court's recognition that the nature of 'unlawful combatants' may change and that the executive's authority to detain others than those in Afghanistan expands with it," Elaine Cassel, a law professor in Virginia tells CounterPunch. "You can envision this being used against political dissidents, where any of us could be seized and detained without counsel for writing, reading, and teaching during wartime."

If there's a bright spot in this awful opinion it is that the Court specifically states that its holding is not meant to cover the detention of "an American citizen captured on American soil." This is a veiled reference to Jose Padilla, the so-called "dirty bomb" suspect, who was picked up in Chicago, label an enemy combatant, and sequestered from legal counsel and family. That's not how Ashcroft reads the decision. One day after the Fourth Circuit issued its ruling in the Hamdi case, the Justice Department filed papers with a federal court in New York demanding that the judge use the Hamdi ruling to keep Padilla from consulting with his lawyers.

Wilkinson is frequently touted as being on Bush's short list for a Supreme Court nomination. The obedient ruling in Hamdi will no doubt boost his prospects. CP

(**OLS** *continued from page 3*)

judgement" by swinging the noose at blacks, there was no cause to take action against him. Then she praised him as a "committed federal public servant." While black farmers have gone broke and lost their farms, Hall's career has thrived. He is now the director of loan servicing at the FSA.

The Wisdom of the Rasta God

At a recent reggae show at the Justice League, a friend of CounterPunch purchased "Members of a New Race: Teachings of H.I.M. Haile Selassie I," an anonymous pamphlet published in Jamaica by Jam-Land Production. The slim volume was candid about the politics of the dead Ethiopian emperor, who is worshipped as a divine being by Rastafarians including the late Bob Marley.

As the crowd grooved and swayed to the music of the talented bands, all of which peppered their sets with ecstatic cries of "Jah Ras Tafari" and "Haile Selassie Eye," our friend wondered if the young, hip, racially-mixed San Francisco crowd would have been surprised to learn of the political precepts of the Conquering Lion of Judah. Here's an excerpt from a 1973 interview with His Imperial Majesty, originally published in the Chicago Tribune:

Q:-There is a question Your Majesty, that has been troubling me since I saw the poor running after your car and fighting over an eighteen pence dollar. What do you feel Your Majesty, when you distribute alms (charitable relief or donations) to your people? What are your feelings when you are faced with their poverty?

H.I.M:- Rich and poor have always existed. Why? Because there are those who work and those who don't. Those that prefer to earn their living and those that prefer to do nothing. Those that work, that want to work, are not poor. For it is true that our Lord, our creator sends us into the world as equals. It is also true that when one is born one is neither rich nor poor. One is naked. It is later on that one becomes rich or poor, according to one's deserts. Yes we too are aware that distributing alms serves no useful purpose. For there is only one means to solve the poverty problem… work.

Q:-Your majesty, I'd like to make sure I've understood you right. Do you mean, Your Majesty, whosoever is poor deserves to be?

H.I.M:-. We have said that whosoever doesn't work because he doesn't want to is poor. We have said those who don't work starve. And now we say that the capacity to earn depends on the individual. Each individual is responsible for his misfortunes, his fate. It is wrong to expect help to fall from above as a gift. Wealth has to be deserved! Work is one of the commandments of our Lord the Creator. … There are good men and there are wicked. The former should be made use of and the latter punished without attempting to understand why some are good and others wicked.

So far as CounterPunch can judge, there's nothing here that isn't in the platforms of the Republican and Democratic Parties. 'And alas, many of the young and the hip entertain the same views.

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PO Box 228
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Don't Just Stand There, Do Something! (See page 4)

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